

ELKHORN SUMMER YURT GUIDE

The Elkhorn yurt is conveniently located for use by hikers, mountain bikers, and equestrians who want a remote ride-in or walk-in experience. The trail is approximately a mile by foot, bike, or horse from any drivable road. Over 50 miles of old roads and single-track trails can be accessed from this yurt, which is located about halfway around the Elkhorn loop trail. The yurt is located at 6,400 feet elevation and offers spectacular views to the north, east, and south. In the evening, a warm orange aspen glow reflects off Wolf, Goat, and Steele Mountains to the east. This is the place to “get away from it all” and watch the wildlife. Elk, deer, bear, and mountain lion are often seen nearby. As the snow melts, hundreds of mushrooms, including the tasty Morel, can be found growing in the dense woods and nearby burn areas. The yurt site is usually snow free from May 7 through November 1.

Reservations:

Reservations for stays within IDPR Idaho City Backcountry Yurts can be online at www.parksandrecreation.idaho.gov or toll free 1-866-634-3246. Reservations are accepted 9-months in advance of your intended stay and no later than 48-hours prior to your intended arrival. A non-refundable fee of \$6 is assessed at the time your reservation is made. All fees must be paid in advance of your stay.

How To Get There:

The Banner Ridge Park N' Ski parking lot is 23.5 miles north of Idaho City on Highway 21. Across from this parking lot, turn right off the highway onto a gravel road. You will immediately pass a toilet. Drive on this gravel road about 2 miles to the yurt parking spot. The road to the yurt will continually climb until you reach the top of the ridge. Do not turn off on any side roads on the way up. A high clearance vehicle is recommended because of the water bars on the road. You will know you are at the parking spot when you see 4x4 wooden posts with yellow diamond shapes (blazes) attached to them on both sides of the road. A “No Snowmobiling” sign should also be attached to a nearby tree. Please park at the small turnout next to the culvert. To get to the Elkhorn yurt, from the parking spot, find a 4x4 pole on the south side of the road. There should be a yellow blaze and a sign stating “Elkhorn Trail”. Follow this yellow blazed trail southwest for 50 yards until you come to the Elkhorn loop trail which has blue blazes and a “Bear Crossing” sign. Turn left (south) into the dense woods. Follow the Elkhorn loop trail's blue blazes through rolling terrain for one mile. At this point, you will be at the second Elkhorn/Cougar trails' intersection and at the base of a short steep climb. Stay on the Elkhorn loop trail and climb to the top of the hill. You should see a 4x4 wood post with yellow blazes and a “Cougar Crossing” sign on it. Follow the yellow blazes generally south and east for 150 yards. At the high point in this area you will find the Elkhorn yurt. If you arrive at the Alpine/Elkhorn trail intersection, you have gone past the yurt turn off.

Elevation Gain and Distance:

From the yurt parking spot it is about a 200-foot rise over 1 mile (one-way). There are a few steep sections.

Wood Pile:

Wood for the stove is located under the yurt entry deck. Wood for use in the fire pit is located west of the fire pit. There are several downed trees in the area which can be cut with the bow saw or axe provided. Please use downed dry timber, as it helps clean up the area and aides in fire protection.

Water:

Water is available at Sawmill Creek about a 1/3 mile from the yurt. To find the creek, follow the yellow blazes about halfway back to the Elkhorn trail. Then find a trail marked with 3" x3" red, square blazes turning right (east). Follow these blazes generally downhill until you come to Sawmill Creek. You will cross the Cougar trail about halfway to the creek. Once you cross Cougar trail, follow the marked trail and you will come to the creek. Because the creek is marshy you should travel downstream or upstream a short distance to find a good place to get water. We recommend that water from this source be boiled for 10 minutes or be drawn with a water filter system such as the "First Need."

Maps Needed:

Idaho City Area Yurt and Trail System, USFS Forest Road, and USGS 7.5 minute topographic "Lowman".

Global Positioning System Locations (UTM):

Elkhorn Yurt 11 T 6132347 E 4875400 N

Banner Ridge Parking Lot 11 T 0611707 E 4875454 N